

## Overview of COVID-19 impact statements in grant applications 2020/21

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This is a summary of the qualitative statements relating to COVID-19 submitted by researchers applying to Academy grants in 2020/21.

### **Process**

The Academy continues to run regular grants rounds throughout the pandemic, as part of our commitment to maintain funding to early career researchers.

Our grant application process incorporates a gap of around six months between application submission and the grant panel. We use this time to confirm eligibility and seek external reviews. As part of our process for certain grants we therefore sometimes contact applicants just before the panel meeting and invite them to submit updates from the intervening period.

From spring 2020 we added a specific paragraph to this invitation asking applicants if and how COVID-19 had impacted their career. This information was circulated to panel members ahead of the panel meeting and considered when assessing applications.

In 2020/21 we collected this information for two complete grants rounds of our Starter Grants for Clinical Lecturers scheme (rounds 24 and 25). Below is a summary of what people said, positive and negative.

### **Results**

91 out of 113 applicants replied to the invitation. Of their replies:

- 56% were affected by laboratory closures or access restrictions.
- 45% reported new publications since original submission of their grant.
- 41% were fully redeployed to full-time clinical duties.
- 36% had challenging personal circumstances.
- 33% were partially redeployed and had to dedicate more time to clinical duties.
- 33% reported positive impacts of COVID-19. Of this group, seven had gained new collaborators, and four had more time for writing manuscripts.
- 24% indicated limited collaboration and networking opportunities.
- 15% reported success in other funding applications since original submission of their grant.
- 13% had training cancelled or postponed.
- 12% indicated a switch in research focus; of these, half were now involved in COVID-19 related studies.

We also reviewed diversity data (gender, ethnicity and disability) from the applicants who replied, and found it did not differ significantly from the overall applicant pool.

### **In the future**

Going forward the Academy has changed the process by which we collect data around COVID-19 impacts. This question is now incorporated into the main application form, rather than as part of the update process.